



# Sermon Growth Guide

**October 16, 2022**  
**Christ Sets You Free**



# Sermon Growth Guide

**October 16, 2022**

**Freedom - Christ Sets You Free**

**Galatians 5:1-15**

**Key Verse:** Galatians 5:1

“It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery.”

**Big Idea:** The freedom Christ offers us is not toward an unrestrained license but an empowered liberty that leads to love and serving one another.

## Foundations

This week we are continuing our study of Galatians, looking at Galatians 5:1-15.

“It is for freedom that Christ has set us free.” As easy as this phrase is to put on home décor and postcards, this verse has a lot of weight behind it. What kind of freedom? What does this freedom allow us to do?

In this passage, we see Paul tie a ribbon on his letter to the Galatians. We learn that, first, Paul is who he says he is and has the authority to share the gospel. Secondly, that it is by grace we have been saved through faith and there is nothing we can do to earn it. Now we see Paul taking the remainder of the time to talk about what this freedom calls us to do. It is not a freedom to indulge in our own wants and desires. It is a freedom that offers purpose, mission, and an opportunity to love and serve others.

“It is for freedom Christ has set you free.” We are given an amazing gift of grace by Christ. How are you using your freedom today?

## Understanding God’s Word

Together, read Galatians 5:1-15.

Why do you think Paul gets so passionate in his argumentation? What do you think is at stake?

## Applying God’s Word

How have you typically understood freedom? Was it more of an unrestrained license or an empowered liberty?

In what area(s) of your life have you fallen away from grace?

## Witnessing God’s Word

Using the free time you have this week, think of one way to serve another brother or sister in Christ.

Keep a journal of all the ways you are seeing this freedom to love and serve one another take shape in your life.

## FREEDOM • Galatians 5:1-15 • Tim McConnell • October 16, 2022

This feels a little bottom line, fast-ball-down-the-middle. Just in case you missed it, Jesus sets you free. Jesus won a better freedom for us. Want to be free in your finances? Trust your provision to Jesus. Want to be free in your love life? Trust it to Jesus. Want to find freedom in your career? Trust your life to Jesus. Jesus sets you free. When we were planning this series, our Creative Director, Chris, was asking, “Okay, so what’s going on here? Tim, is this like you on a horse with your face painted blue lifting a sword and yelling, freedom!!!” No, not really. Galatians tells us we may not be thinking about freedom in the right way. Doing whatever occurs to you with no regard for the implications or results, that’s not free, that’s foolish. Freedom isn’t just doing what you want. It’s being liberated to do what you ought, to be who you were made to be. It’s deeper than circumstances. You can be free in Christ and physically in prison. You can be free in Christ and physically stuck in slavery. You can be free in Christ and live in a country ruled by tyrants and dictators. Christ sets you free. A better freedom.

When Jesus sets you free, you are free, with a freedom that is internal and eternal. But the internal freedom makes us want to change the external realities; eternal freedom makes us push back against the temporal limits to freedom. Throughout history, internally free Christians found that inner freedom pushing them to do things external like stand up against slavery and strive to eliminate it, to push back on dictators and bullies and defend our basic human rights. Plenty of historians would tell you the Reformation spawned the modern era of individual liberty and the Great Awakening was the impetus behind the American Revolution. Once you have tasted freedom in Christ, you have a very hard time accepting tyranny in the world. It isn’t just inside, invisible freedom.

Today we get to the key verse of Galatians. This is the lynchpin verse of this letter, this book of the Bible. This

verse is what makes the freedom letter the freedom letter. “It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery” (Galatians 5:1). Freedom, inside and out. Freedom, then and now. Freedom forever and freedom today. For freedom Christ has set you free. What is holding you back? Regret from the past? Shame in the present? What is tying you down? Defeating self-talk? Patterns or habits or addictions you don’t think you have the power to escape? Where are the barriers and mountains blocking your way? What is making life impossible for you? For freedom Christ has set you free. You don’t know what God is about to change. You don’t know what God has already changed or is changing right now. God can change hearts. God can set up and remove kings. You might be caught in an impossible situation at work, and one year from today you will look back in amazement at how God answered your prayers. You may be trapped in a relationship that just won’t change. By Christmas you could look back to today and say, “That’s when God moved in.” You don’t know. I mean, if Tennessee can beat Alabama... You just don’t know! Anything is possible. God is on the move. Believe it this morning: For freedom Christ has set you free.

Now, how are you going to use that freedom? In the first four chapters of Galatians, Paul has argued first for his own authority and right to preach the gospel as an apostle called by Jesus to do it. Second, Paul has made a solid argument defending the clarity of the gospel, proving that we are justified and made righteous before God not by our own works but by putting our faith in Jesus Christ and receiving the gift of grace. Now, as the letter turns toward the final stretch, Paul takes the rest of the time to explain that Christian freedom is not unrestrained license but an empowered liberty that leads to loving responsibility and inner holiness through the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit. Martin Luther wrote a



treatise called “The Freedom of the Christian” during the Reformation. He expressed these two layers of Christian freedom this way, “A Christian is a perfectly free lord of all, subject to none. A Christian is a perfectly dutiful servant of all, subject of all, subject to all.” There is a lot to think about when you think about **Freedom**. I’m still learning, as we all are. When do you fight for liberty and when do you use your freedom to freely serve others with sacrifice?

It all begins with this statement. “For freedom Christ has set you free.” Why did Jesus set you free? Jesus set you free because he wanted you to be free! For freedom Jesus set you free. The issue at the top of mind is the debate about circumcision. This isn’t a blanket prohibition against that practice, but against the motive behind it. To take the road of satisfying the law is to leave the road of grace. Pick between salvation by works and salvation by faith. Some want to go with grace but cover their bases as well. Galatians draws a stark line. Trust in Christ. To keep acting like you need to cover your bases and keep a plan B in the works just reveals that you don’t really trust Jesus. Jesus says, “I have done that for you. I have achieved your forgiveness. I have paid the penalty for your sins and I have accomplished your adoption into eternal life with God. It’s done. It is finished.” Oh, OK. But I’m just gonna keep the second track going too...just in case. “You who are trying to be justified by the law have been alienated from Christ; you have fallen away from grace” (Galatians 5:4). To choose works, in this case to choose circumcision, is to choose legalism which means fulfilling the whole law to achieve righteousness, and abandoning grace, and “...Christ will be of no value to you at all” (Galatians 5:2). Who is Jesus to you if your plan is to save yourself through being good?

In an interview with *Christianity Today* magazine in 2005, Bono talked about the difference between Karma and Grace. Karma is the way people

talk about a kind of deeds-based, behavior-based blessing in the spiritual realm. You get back what you put out there. But Bono said he needs more than getting what he deserves: “Grace defies reason and logic. Love interrupts, if you like, the consequences of your actions, which in my case is very good news indeed, because I’ve done a lot of stupid stuff. I’d be in big trouble if Karma was going to finally be my judge. I’m holding out for Grace. I’m holding out that Jesus took my sins onto the Cross, because I know who I am, and I hope I don’t have to depend on my own religiosity. It’s not our own good works that get us through the gates of heaven.” It is getting repetitive now. But it bears repeating because we repeatedly fall back out of grace and into works. Salvation is by grace through faith in Jesus Christ—a free gift.

In this case, the Galatian church had the gospel fully in view, and they were running toward it full speed when somebody cut into their lane and cut them off and blew them off course. That made Paul a little mad. “You were running a good race. Who cut in on you to keep you from obeying the truth? That kind of persuasion does not come from the one who calls you” (Galatians 5:7-8). That’s not Jesus. Jesus doesn’t ask you to do that. Jesus doesn’t require that of you. Now, Paul is confident that they will make it out of confusion and back into the clarity of the gospel. Once again, as we have said, it is all about the cross. If you put your hope in good works and happy Karma, “...in that case the offense of the cross has been abolished” (Galatians 5:11). See when you look at the cross it all becomes clear. What’s the offense of the cross? That you can’t save yourself. That you are not good enough to earn heaven. That you are ruined in sin and in need of a Savior to die on your behalf. That’s the scandal, the offense, of the cross. Paul believes they will get it clear again, just look to the cross. But in the meantime, “As for those agitators, I wish they would go the whole way and emasculate



themselves!” (Galatians 5:12). Anyone who says you have to cut yourself with a knife to follow Jesus, go ahead, put the knife to yourself. That’s pretty explicit. But, church, the gospel is worth defending with passion. It is the only way we can truly be free.

For freedom Christ has set you free. But is it libertinism? Is it unlimited, boundless license to indulge your own wants and desires however you wish? Isn’t that what freedom is? “You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh; rather, serve one another humbly in love. For the entire law is fulfilled in keeping this one command: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself’” (Galatians 5:13-14). There is a purpose for your life, and it doesn’t end in you. Could that possibly be true? Could that really be it? Could it be that the sum, the entirety, the whole purpose and meaning and core ethic of the whole law is that there might be a freedom Jesus can give you that makes you free enough to escape yourself? There might be a freedom found in Jesus powerful enough to break you out of your selfishness and give you a purpose, a mission, a reason to exist—loving outside of you. Loving God, loving neighbor, loving more than you. “Serve one another humbly in love.” That’s no small thing. That’s a miracle really. It is no easy enterprise, breaking out of the orbit of selfishness and finding the freedom to actually love and serve those around you. “The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love” (Galatians 5:6). For freedom Christ has set you free. Freely love. Freely serve. This is not a license to libertinism, but a power to love, a power to break out of meaningless self-service, and into meaningful, purposeful, impactful, sacrificial love.

Then verse 15. The other side. “If you bite and devour each other, watch out or you will be destroyed by each other” (Galatians 5:15). It almost feels like he is checking himself there, because he got a little hot. The Spirit puts him in check. You know, the word

“sarcasm” means “flesh-cutting,” or “flesh ripping” actually. It’s easy to get cynical. It’s easy to fall into patterns of sarcasm, tearing one another down, biting and devouring each other gulp after sarcastic gulp. That’s the easy and lazy road and it leads right back into the self-centered life. It’s harder to say a genuine word to build someone up. Can you exit the self-centered gravity and step out to genuinely love? The only thing that matters is faith expressing itself in love.

If you look carefully at this passage, the great Christian triumvirate emerges: faith, hope and love. We are not saved by empty faith or by selfish faith, by faith in ourselves; we are saved when we put our faith in Jesus. That faith makes us hopeful. If Jesus is going to bring me home, maybe his Spirit will start to work in me right now. A little yeast in the dough, a little leaven in the batter mix, and I can feel the Spirit of God changing me on the inside. I’m free inside. I’m growing more free inside. Faith produces hope. Change can happen. I’m free in here, and that makes me want to see freedom out there. Now I’m invested in the out there; and you’re out there. I’m invested in you. Faith produces hope produces love, all by the power of the Spirit of God.

“For the entire law is fulfilled in keeping this one command: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself’” (Galatians 5:14). Can that be right? Jesus did. Jesus loved His neighbor as Himself. In all the world there has never been another man like Jesus. He gave Himself away. He emptied Himself for others. He gave His life for you and for me to gain a future and a hope for us. To know Him is to love Him. To trust Him is to be confident in your purpose. To bend the knee and conscript yourself to His service is to finally be free. Free like you have never known. Christ sets you free.

